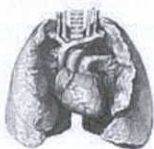


Respiratory Care



*A Medical Career Giving
a Breath for Life*



Published by
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What is Respiratory Care?

Respiratory care provides relief to millions of Americans who have difficulty breathing or cannot sustain the act of breathing on their own. In California, respiratory care may only be provided by licensed respiratory care practitioners.

Respiratory Care Practitioners

Respiratory Care Practitioners (RCP) are one of three licensed health care professionals who work at patients' bedsides, with the other two being physicians and nurses. RCPs work under the direction of a medical director and specialize in providing evaluation of and treatment to patients with breathing difficulties as a result of heart, lung and other disorders, as well as providing diagnostic, educational, and rehabilitation services.

Many people, from newborns to the elderly, have trouble breathing due to impaired or nonfunctional lungs. RCPs are the specialists who evaluate, treat and care for patients with breathing disorders. Temporary relief may be given to persons with emphysema, pulmonary edema, or asthma.

Emergency care may be provided for heart failure, asphyxiation, or as the result of a stroke. Treatment may also be given for head injuries, carbon monoxide poisoning, gangrene, drug poisoning, or tetanus.



Newly Licensed RCPs

Newly licensed RCPs were asked what they like about their career and what drew them to the respiratory care field. This is what they had to say:

"I enjoy respiratory therapy, because it makes my life meaningful knowing that I am helping and in some cases saving lives."

"I really like working with the doctors; they rely on our expertise and assessment skills."

"A busy day may include assembling, operating and monitoring various medical devices which allows me to administer oxygen, or medications to assist with breathing."

"I particularly enjoy the one on one contact with patients. I spend time explaining treatments and monitoring their responses to therapy."

"I chose the respiratory care program because I did not have to be placed on a waiting list which allowed me to get to work sooner."

"I was excited about becoming a respiratory care practitioner because I wanted to help people."

"I entered my respiratory care program because I wanted to specialize in an area of health care."

"I chose respiratory care over nursing because it provides care from the waist up."

"I chose respiratory therapy for a career because of the promotional opportunities available and the pays not bad either."

"I enjoy respiratory care because I'm relied upon as an expert in cases where breathing disorders are an issue."



Education

The minimum education requirements consist of an Associate Degree with the completion of an approved respiratory care educational and training program¹. Currently, there are 27 schools in California that offer either the entry level or advanced level, or both, respiratory care programs.

Areas of study for respiratory therapy programs include human anatomy and physiology, chemistry, physics, microbiology, and mathematics plus technical courses dealing with procedures, equipment, and clinical tests. Both programs include courses in laboratory and clinical practice at hospitals and other healthcare facilities. Both program levels take 2 years of full-time dedication to complete.



¹ Education requirements actually consist of completion of specific units needed to culminate in an Associate Degree. However, the Respiratory Care Board is currently seeking to clarify education requirements, legislatively, as presented in this brochure.

Employment Outlook

The National Bureau for Labor Statistics reports that, "job opportunities are expected to remain good. Employment of respiratory therapists is expected to increase faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2010, because of substantial growth of the middle-aged and elderly population—a development that will heighten the incidence of cardiopulmonary disease.

Older Americans suffer most from respiratory ailments and cardiopulmonary diseases such as pneumonia, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and heart disease. As their numbers increase, the need for respiratory therapists will increase, as well. In addition, advances in treating victims of heart attacks, accident victims, and premature infants (many of whom are dependent on a ventilator during part of their treatment) will increase the demand for the services of respiratory care practitioners."

The California Employment Development Department (EDD) reported in 1998 that respiratory care was the 9th fastest growing occupation in the State of California. The EDD projected a 58% increase in respiratory therapy positions from 1998 (with 8,100 positions) to 2008 (with a projected 12,800 positions).

Salaries and Benefits

The median annual salary for Respiratory Care Practitioners at the entry level was \$32,860 in the year 2000. The median annual salary for Respiratory Care Practitioners at an advanced level was \$37,680 in the year 2000, with the top 10% earning more than \$50,660. And of course respiratory care supervisors, managers, and coordinators earn even more!

Many employers also offer benefits including medical, dental, vision or life insurance, paid vacation, sick leave and retirement plans.



**Call or
write for a
brochure
today!**

For more information on this exciting career, please contact the Respiratory Care Board of California for a full brochure that includes:

- Common Heart and Lung Disorders Treated by RCPs
- The Types of Services Provided by RCPs
- Health Care Settings
- The RCP Career Ladder
- RCP Salaries
- RCP Working Conditions
- The Employment Outlook for RCPs
- 3 Steps to Becoming a Licensed RCP
- Respiratory Care Education Programs in California
- The National Examination
- California Licensure
- Additional Resources

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